

### **Proposed House Bill 5630**

**Good afternoon, I would like to take this opportunity to thank you for your valuable time.**

**I have practiced dental hygiene in the State of Ct for over 30 years mostly in private practice however many years ago I worked briefly for the Meriden school system servicing needy children in a school based program until budget cuts eliminated the dental hygiene positions. The past year I have been employed by the State of Ct for DMHAS. Our dental department services 580 patients at Conn Valley Hospital and Whiting Forensic prison in Middletown. I am here to hopefully share my patient's stories with you since they are unable to do so. Access to dental care in our state was quite evident last year at the CSDA's MOM held in May. As I pulled up at 4:30 am to the Tolland High school I could see through the fog a line of people snaking around the building waiting to have dental services. I had tears in my eyes witnessing the apparent need before me and even though 1200 patients received dental care that weekend only a fraction of care was delivered. Sadly many people were turned away. Patients could have 1 dental service an extraction or a cleaning and some working class families with 4 children waited 5 hours to have that 1 dental procedure done. I have never in my life witnessed patients waiting for such a lengthy period of time without complaint, just really grateful to be there and appreciative of our time. In private practice, patients wait 5 minutes and complain. We treated children, college students, and the elderly but what about those patients who didn't have transportation or the means to get to Tolland .Now remember all those years that I worked in private practice I wasn't servicing the underserved, I had patient's who had dental insurance who could afford \$3,000 implants on multiple teeth and have their teeth cleaned 4 times a year if necessary. My family members don't know what dental pain feels like and my children have always had the privilege of routine dental care.**

**Let's talk about the patient's I see every day! Many of my patients in the addiction's program at CVH have tried to extract their own teeth because of the inability to obtain dental services in the community. I see 20 year olds with 2 remaining teeth out of 32 possible teeth, who need to leave our program and find a job. I have patients with oral lesions who need to be monitored by a dentist upon discharge and I know what their chances are of having a dental appointment. I am embarrassed to hand our list of 43 community dental providers to our patients knowing that either the providers are not taking new patients or there is a waiting list**

over 6 months. We have had patients from our General Psych division discharge from the hospital and call us in desperation because they can't get in to a dentist to fix their denture or take care of their toothache!! Our patients need dental services desperately and I implore you to consider House Bill 5630. I can see first hand how expanded duties will benefit our patients daily. I feel that granting dental auxiliaries the opportunity to expand their knowledge and skills will only benefit our state and improve not only dental health but our patient's overall health. There is a strong connection to oral health and systemic disease so the importance of dental care needs to be emphasized. We can further expand the number of patients seen daily by increasing dental educational opportunities and providing care for the underserved population. I personally have taken advantage of the law passed in 2005 for dental hygienists to administer local anesthesia and this has been a huge advantage for our patients. According to the Department of Public Health's Strategies Goal III a workforce needs to be built which will integrate oral health into existing practices. Well it's time to start building!!!

Sincerely Yours,

*Kathy Langlais RDH*  
Kathy Langlais, RDH